

Directly observed procedural skills – what do the assessors think?

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Background

Directly observed procedural skills (DOPS) assessments are widely used in clinical education for the assessment of competency in real-life situations. DOPS assessments have been used at Glasgow for the last 5 years, as the principle formal method of assessing students’ practical skills in final year. Importantly, in these assessments, encounters are not simulated and the assessment of practical skills occurs during normal clinical duties using real animals. The level which candidates have to achieve to pass a DOPS assessment is based on an expert consensus opinion (between assessors) of what constitutes clinical competence for a new graduate.

Aims

The aims of this study were to; i) gather more information about staff performance in DOPS assessment, ii) reinforce best practice and iii) survey assessors’ perceptions of DOPS to assess the validity of these assessments.

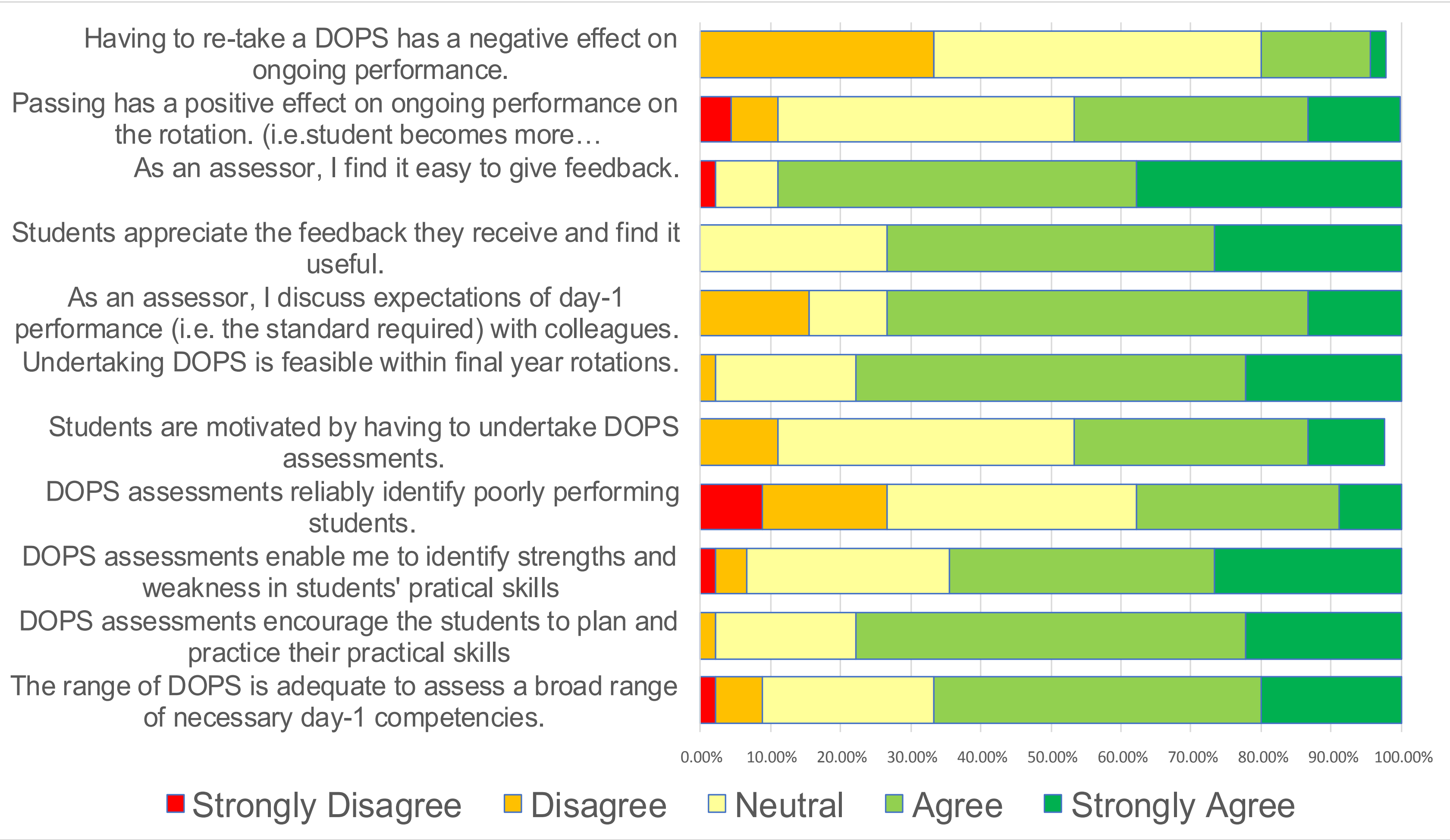
Methods

Each assessor (participant) was reviewed by a peer (or by self-reflection) once during the study period (3 months). Core rotation leaders were observed by other rotation leaders to ensure consistency of assessment across the final year core curriculum and enable transfer of best practices between core rotations. Assessors were able to see the criteria upon which they were evaluated beforehand and this was intended to reinforce expected best practice. Participants completed a short written survey commenting on assessors’ performance as well as a section to rate and comment on the perceived validity of the DOPS as a form of assessment.

Assessor opinions

44 assessors participated in the study. Figure 1 shows responses to survey questions regarding the reliability, validity ad education impact of DOPS assessment.

90% of assessors would recommend DOPS assessments to another veterinary school



Assessor performance

A summary of the assessor behaviour in the peer observation exercise is shown in tables 1 & 2.

	Yes	No	% Yes	% No
Before the DOPS was there appropriate discussion with the student? Did they feel at ease? Was the expected level made clear?	36	8	82%	18%
During the DOPS was the environment appropriate for the assessment (e.g. noise/ interruptions etc.). Did the assessor avoid giving prompts or encouragement?	36	7	84%	16%
Was the case/animal chosen appropriate for the DOPS assessment?	44	0	100%	0%
Was immediate oral feedback, together with the outcome given to the student?	42	2	95%	5%
Was full written feedback added to the DOPS form?	37	7	84%	16%

With regards to feedback provided	Median Score	Range
Was it specific to the performance and encouraging?	4.5	(3-5)
Did the feedback make clear the ways in which the student can remediate or improve?	4.5	(3-5)

(5 - Strongly Agree - 1 Strongly Disagree)

Conclusions

In conclusion, at least when peer observation is undertaken, feedback provision appears to be good. Full written feedback appears to be provided less often than oral feedback. In addition, based on the survey, 88% of assessors either agreed or strongly agreed that they found it easy to give feedback. Overall, 90% of assessors would recommend DOPS assessments to another veterinary school which is clearly encouraging evidence supporting the educational value of DOPS.